



Bespoke Guild Mark

An Award for Excellence in British Bespoke Furniture

The Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers is the Livery Company for the British Furniture Industry. Its purpose is to enhance and support that industry. Perhaps the most important way it does so is by encouraging public recognition of excellence and innovation by the grant of its Guild Marks to furniture judged to be outstanding by its Inspection Panels. Guild Marks for Bespoke Furniture are awarded for pieces made as single items or in batches of up to twelve.

Criteria

Excellence in design, materials, craftsmanship and function.

Is the piece, in both design and craftsmanship, exceptional?

There are other matters to consider, for example:

- Are the materials, including the fittings and the finish, appropriate?
- Are the materials from sustained sources? Items incorporating CITES listed materials will not be considered for a Guild Mark. (See note 1 on the Application Form.)
- Does the design of the piece show innovation?
- Are its proportions and scale harmonious?
- Is it fit for purpose?
- Will it last?

Furniture need not be complicated or elaborate to meet these requirements.

Benefits

Pieces of furniture awarded a Bespoke Guild Mark are recognisably items of quality and excellence. To substantiate and promote this accolade, Guild Mark holders are entitled to:

- a) use the Company's Coat of Arms and the Bespoke Guild Mark logo (together) on any publicity material relating to each piece awarded a Guild Mark
- b) receive a numbered Guild Mark certificate which clearly states the names of the designer and maker (in itself a guarantee of the authenticity of the piece) and a unique enamelled disc to be fixed to each piece awarded a Guild Mark
- c) have a page on the Company's website (furnituremakers.org.uk) containing a link to their own site/s, their contact details, and a general description of their practice, with further pages for each Guild Mark (up to four) that they hold. These pages are linked to categorised thumbnail images of all Bespoke Guild Mark pieces
- d) be entered, in most cases and without further application, into the annual competition for the Claxton Stevens Prize of £1,000 for the Bespoke Guild Mark piece judged to be the best of all those awarded in that Company year (May-April)

Applications

Applications are welcomed from designer makers in the United Kingdom making furniture of original design to commission or speculatively, either as one-offs or in small batches.

Applications must be made on the current form. Copies are available on the website or from the Clerk. 'Application Guidelines' are also available on the website or from the Clerk.

Sets of chairs count as one item but other pieces in a suite or group must be entered as separate applications.

A maximum of three applications are allowed from one individual or firm in each Company year (May-April). If a piece is rejected it may not be resubmitted in the same form.

Fees

A non-refundable contribution towards administration costs of £35 including vat must accompany each application.

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Assessment Procedure

Applications are considered by the Bespoke Guild Mark Committee in May, September, December and February each year and should be received by the end of the previous month. The first assessment is made using the images and details sent with the application form. Good quality images are therefore vital (see application form).

If selected, the second stage is a physical inspection by a Panel of two or three members of the Company (usually including experienced designer-makers), who prepare a report. Finally, the Committee, again using the images, the application form and the Inspection Panel's report,

decides whether the piece fulfils all four criteria and therefore merits the award of a Guild Mark. The applicant is notified either way as soon as possible afterwards.

If a Guild Mark is awarded, two numbered Certificates, each carrying a photograph of the piece, are signed by the Master, the Chairman of the Bespoke Guild Mark Committee and the Clerk. One is bound into the Guild Mark Register, and the other is sent, unframed, to the successful applicant.

Marking

To identify in perpetuity a piece awarded a Bespoke Guild Mark, a small gilded disc enamelled with the Company's coat of arms and engraved with the year and the Guild Mark number is sent with the Certificate to be fixed to the piece.

Copyright

The copyright of Guild Mark certificates and discs remains the property of the Company. Additional certificates can be purchased for *bona fide* use by the designer, maker or client.

Publicity

The Company will endeavour to obtain all possible publicity and recognition for Guild Mark pieces by arranging occasional exhibitions and promotions and in the Press.

It is hoped that successful applicants will also publicise the award of a Guild Mark as much as possible in their own literature and otherwise.

The maker (if applicable) will also be entitled to use and promote the award. However, if he or she is not the same person as the applicant, the maker must acknowledge the applicant and the designer in all publicity material when promoting the piece to further his or her own ends.

Repeats

A Guild Mark holder may apply to have an existing Guild Mark extended to up to twelve repeats of the same design. Each repeat is treated as a new application and the same fee is payable, i.e, £35 (inc vat). New certificates are not issued but new enamelled discs are. The disc/s will bear the same Guild Mark number as the original piece but the year will be that of the making of the repeat/s.

The Company may call in one or more of such repeat items for inspection and may, at its discretion, rescind the permission for repeat use of the original Guild Mark.

Certificate of Merit

At the discretion of the Bespoke Guild Mark Committee, a student or first time applicant may be awarded a Certificate of Merit if, in the Committee's view, the piece is a very fine one but not of the standard of excellence required for a full Guild Mark.

The Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers

The Furniture Makers is the 83rd Livery Company of the City of London. Founded as a Guild in 1951, it was granted the Letters Patent of a Livery Company in 1963. One of its rules states that every person joining the Company must be engaged in or with the British furniture industry.

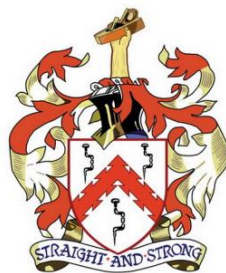
In 1958, shortly after the founding of the Guild, the first Guild Mark scheme was launched and over four hundred pieces have since received the Bespoke Guild Mark. The second, the Manufacturing Guild Mark, to reward firms in the UK judged to achieve excellence in furniture manufacturing, was started in 1993. These two schemes were joined in 2008 by the Design Guild Mark which recognises excellence in the design of pieces in volume production.

The three logos, used on the certificates and elsewhere, define the three categories: the Bespoke, the Manufacturing and the Design Guild Marks.

Bespoke
Guild Mark

Manufacturing
Guild Mark

Design
Guild Mark



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